

FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Modoc NF – Pacific Southwest Region
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<http://www.fs.usda.gov/modoc>

What can a Devil's Garden Horse do for you?

The Modoc National Forest is planning to gather 500 Devils Garden Plateau Wild Horses this September and October. After the gather and a period of settling and specific veterinary health services, horses will become available for adoption and sale with limitations to people who are vetted for their ability and facilities to care for the number of horses requested.

Providing a good home for Devil's Garden Wild Horses is a meaningful way to support the horses and the land that provides for them. It is clear people also benefit from spending time with horses. And it is not just horse-crazy teenagers who appreciate connecting with these magnificent animals. Horse trainers, veterans, ranchers, endurance riders, packers, 4-H youth and so many others have discovered the benefits of the horse-human relationship.

Modoc County 4-H youth have broken the mold for mustang training. This year's first Devils Garden Challenge in Alturas produced a display of competence and skill at a highly proficient level. The youth proved—yet again—the trainability of the Devil's Garden Horses.



It has only been two or three generations since horses were a critical part of our lives. For most of human history, horses have worked, played and lived with people. Partners in agriculture, transportation, war and sport, we have been side-by-side companions for millennia.

The early pioneers, cavalry and local tribes started the Devil's Garden Herd when they used the vast Devil's Garden Plateau for additional grazing. The result is a large herd with a variety of genetics and characteristics.

Today, the Forest Service effort to reduce the herd population is an opportunity for horse lovers to adopt or purchase Devil's Garden Horses and experience the benefits of the horse-human relationship.

Interest across the country has resulted in DG horses finding new homes in at least 25 states. Many new owners are trainers who are participating in competitive training challenges and gentling mustangs for clients.

Annual gathers reducing the population for a thriving ecological balance with the land designated for their use result in these amazing creatures finding happy homes across our great country. Of the several tools used to gather horses, the process of helicopter gathering is the most humane method in the hands of experienced helicopter pilots and crew.



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It is also the most efficient and cost-effective method available to wild horse managers to maintain a healthy herd. Experienced pilots move horses slowly, skillfully and gently to the trap. They travel short distances, cognizant of animals' exertion and speed. Contractors and Forest Service representatives fly or walk the terrain ahead of time to survey and select the more even ground with the fewest obstacles. The trap sites are also reviewed beforehand by archaeology crews and a safety officer.

After locations of concentrated populations are determined, trap sites are set up purposefully and carefully to reduce the impact on the horses, wildlife and the land. Sites are selected to be safe for the helicopter as well as the horses.

The day's gather of horses is transported by truck and trailer from the trap site to the Double Devil Wild Horse Corrals, a short-term holding facility managed by the Modoc National Forest. Horses are humanely cared for by an exceptional team of forest employees and partners until placed into approved homes or sanctuaries. A selected number of horses are also transported to the BLM Litchfield Corrals where they are also available for adoption through BLM processes.



In their exuberance over simple things like a roll in the sand to scratch their backs, drinking out of a cool water fountain, or showing obvious pleasure in having a young human pay so much attention to them; the horses are obvious beneficiaries. They are also constantly teaching their human companions about patience, caring, confidence, responsibility and the needs of large animals.

Horses have always been able to read the emotions of people. Only recently have we also come to understand how valuable this trait is in equine assisted therapy programs for wounded veterans, inmate horse training programs and therapy for trauma victims or autistic children.

Almost all trained horses enjoy work. Their favorite thing to do is just be with their people and other horses, but many times they also relish having a job like herding cattle, packing in the mountains or getting to run and jump over obstacles.

Far removed from two or three generations ago before internet, cars, electricity and every modern convenience, Devil's Garden Horses can now help all ages stay connected to history, nature, relationships, responsibilities and joy.



After this year's gather, please consider what you can do to help provide a good home for a Devil's Garden Wild Horse. We can guarantee you won't be sorry and will benefit more than most folks will ever know. Please apply today at <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3r3>.

Check out your new horses at <https://www.facebook.com/pg/doubledevilwildhorsecorrals/photos/>.



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